

# NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Xian Zhang conducts Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2 with Gregory D. McDaniel set to conduct New Jersey premiere of Nico Muhly's *Sounding***

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony to present Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2 with Music Director Xian Zhang conducting. The Symphony's Colton Conducting Fellow Gregory D. McDaniel will conduct Debussy's *Clair de Lune* and Nico Muhly's *Sounding*.

The four performances will take place Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 1:30 pm, at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark; Friday, March 14, 2025, at 8 pm, at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton; Saturday, March 15, 2025, at 8 pm, at NJPAC; and Sunday, March 16, 2025, at 3 pm, at Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown.

The program starts with Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, the third movement in his *Suite Bergamasque*, arranged by André Caplet. Originally composed in 1889 and later revised in 1903, *Clair de Lune* was inspired by a poem of the same name by Paul Verlaine and embodies both the beauty and sadness of moonlight. The first half of the program continues with the New Jersey premiere of Nico Muhly's *Sounding*, which is a co-commission with Vermont Symphony. Adam Tandler played the premiere in Burlington last May and will be featured as the soloist in this program.

The program concludes with Zhang conducting Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2. While composing the symphony, Rachmaninoff was influenced by Tchaikovsky. In the same turn, Eric Carmen's 1976 hit song "Never Gonna Fall in Love Again" drew inspiration from the Second Symphony's slow movement.

The concert on Thursday, March 13, at 1:30 pm at NJPAC will follow a Relaxed Performance format, which is designed to accommodate the differing needs of our patrons. We encourage you to bring your own sensory manipulatives, noise-reduction headphones and other tools that will allow you to react and enjoy the music in a way that is most natural for you! For more information about our Relaxed Performances and the resources you can expect to be available, visit [njsymphony.org/relaxedperformance](https://njsymphony.org/relaxedperformance).

Two pre-concert Classical Conversations will take place on Friday, March 14, at 7 pm at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton and Sunday, March 16, at 2 pm at Mayo Performing

Arts Center in Morristown. Concertgoers will be able to learn more about the music from Symphony musicians, guest artists, and other engaging insiders.

New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra's Curtland E. Fields Ensemble will present a Concert Prelude in the lobby on Saturday, March 15, at 7 pm at NJPAC in Newark.

## **Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2**

### **New Jersey Symphony Classical**

**Xian Zhang** conductor

**Gregory D. McDaniel** conductor

**Adam Tandler** piano

**New Jersey Symphony**

**Newark** → Thursday, March 13, 1:30 pm, NJPAC

**Princeton** → Friday, March 14, 8 pm, Richardson Auditorium

**Newark** → Saturday, March 15, 8 pm, NJPAC

**Morristown** → Sunday, March 16, 3 pm, Mayo Performing Arts Center

**Claude Debussy** *Clair de Lune*

**Nico Muhly** *Sounding* for Piano and Orchestra (New Jersey Symphony Co-Commission)

**Sergei Rachmaninoff** Symphony No. 2

More information on concerts and tickets: [njsymphony.org/events](https://njsymphony.org/events).

### **About Xian Zhang**

2024–25 marks the GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning conductor Xian Zhang's ninth season as music director of the New Jersey Symphony. Starting in 2025–26, Zhang will also hold the role of music director at Seattle Symphony. Zhang holds the position of conductor emeritus of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, having previously held the position of music director between 2009–2016.

The 2024–25 season sees Zhang return to the Metropolitan Opera in New York to conduct David McVicar's acclaimed production of Puccini's *Tosca*.

Zhang is in high demand as a guest conductor, appearing regularly with Philadelphia Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic, returning to both in 2024–25. Her recording with Philadelphia Orchestra and Time for Three, *Letters for The Future* (released 2022 on Deutsche Grammophon), won multiple GRAMMY Awards in the Best Contemporary Classical Composition (Kevin Puts' *Contact*), and Best Classical Instrumental Solo categories.

Following a successful collaboration at Tanglewood Festival 2023, Zhang returns to Boston Symphony Orchestra this season. She remains a favored guest of the Orchestra of St. Luke's and recently stepped in for their Brahms Requiem concert at

Carnegie Hall. Other 2024–25 highlights include Montreal Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, National Arts Centre (NAC) Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra, and Milan Symphony Orchestra.

Zhang continues to enjoy good relationships with many leading orchestras worldwide, including London Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Houston Symphony, St Louis Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra DC, and Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse.

Zhang previously served as principal guest conductor of the BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales, the first female conductor to hold a titled role with a BBC orchestra and principal guest conductor of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In 2002, she won first prize in the Maazel-Vilar Conductor's Competition. She was appointed New York Philharmonic's assistant conductor in 2002, subsequently becoming their associate conductor and the first holder of the Arturo Toscanini Chair.

### **About Gregory D. McDaniel**

Gregory D. McDaniel is a passionate conductor who is active in many different musical surroundings.

Praised for his “impeccable musicality and technique” (*La Presse – Montreal*), McDaniel was recently featured in concert with the Orchestre Métropolitain in Québec, conducting Lili Boulanger's *D'un Matin de printemps*. Last summer, as a member of the Orchestral Conducting Academy at the Académie du Domaine Forget de Charlevoix, he worked with the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec under the tutelage of conductors Thomas Rosner and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Last season, McDaniel led two projects for the Houston Ebony Opera Guild, including their annual African-American Music Gala, which featured a performance of Julia Perry's *Stabat Mater*. He also worked with Opera in the Heights as cover conductor and chorus master for their production of *La Bohème*, and cover conductor for their production of *Hansel and Gretel*.

This upcoming season, in addition to receiving the Colton Conducting Fellowship with the New Jersey Symphony, McDaniel will work with Opera in the Heights as cover conductor and chorus master for their production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He will also conduct the Houston premiere of Laura Kaminsky's pivotal opera *As One* for HOPERA.

Past seasons have included leading performances of William Grant Still's *Highway 1, USA*, and Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up* for Opera Ithaca. He also had the opportunity to work with the Boise Baroque Orchestra in works by Mozart and Haydn, and he also worked with the Prizm Ensemble in a concert that featured Emmy and GRAMMY Award-winning baritone Reginald Smith, Jr. With the University of North Texas Chamber, and Concert Orchestras, McDaniel conducted the works of Beethoven,

Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Puccini, and more.

Some of McDaniel's past conducting opportunities include working with the Fort Bend Symphony Orchestra and Chorus (TX), the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Opera Conducting Initiative, and participating in a conducting fellowship with the Allentown Symphony. Past operatic opportunities include various works of Bizet (CCM) and a production of Poulenc's *Dialogue of the Carmelites* (EADO in Houston). A native of Houston, TX, Gregory received degrees from the University of North Texas in orchestral conducting and the University of Houston in music education.

### **About Adam Tandler**

GRAMMY-nominated pianist Adam Tandler is a recipient of the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists, the Yvar Mikhashoff Prize, and "currently the hottest pianist on the American contemporary classical scene" (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*), a "remarkable and insightful musician" (*LA Times*), and a "relentlessly adventurous pianist" (*Washington Post*) "joyfully rocking out at his keyboard" (*New York Times*).

A pioneer of DIY culture in classical music, at age 23 Tandler performed solo recitals in all fifty states as part of a grassroots tour called America "88x50," the subject of his acclaimed memoir, *88x50*. He has gone on to become one of classical music's most recognized and celebrated artists, commissioning major works from composers as diverse as Christian Wolff and Devonté Hynes, and appearing as soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra, LA Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and on the main stages of Carnegie Hall, the Barbican Centre, Sydney Opera House, Lincoln Center, and BAM. As a recording artist, he is featured on Wild Up's GRAMMY-nominated third volume of Julius Eastman's music, and has also released albums of music by Liszt, Robert Palmer, and of his own original work. He recently commissioned 16 new pieces using the entire inheritance left to him by his father after his unexpected death, with works by Laurie Anderson, Nico Muhly and Missy Mazzoli, among others, as part of a program called *Inheritances*, a *New York Times* Critic Pick described as "not only a display of contemporary compositional force, but also a true show. . .emotionally involving. . .with a sense of true dramatic stakes." *Inheritances* will appear on a forthcoming album on the New Amsterdam label. As Greenwood Cemetery's 2023–24 artist-in-residence, Tandler had a site-specific installation, *Exit Strategy*, which was open through summer 2024. He also recently published his second book, *tidepools*.

Tandler is a Yamaha Artist and serves on the piano faculty of NYU.

### **About New Jersey Symphony**

New Jersey Symphony is a GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning orchestra. Under the direction of the Music Director Xian Zhang, the Symphony performs more than 60 concerts at mainstage venues across the state, including Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Red Bank, and Morristown as well as schools and public spaces statewide. Programming at the Symphony reflects an unwavering commitment to diversity,

equity, and inclusion while providing students across the state unparalleled opportunities to achieve musical excellence through its Youth Orchestra and other outreach programs. In 2024, the Symphony announced it would continue to deliver its statewide activities from a new, permanent office, rehearsal, and concert space in Jersey City, set to open in 2026. For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit our website at [njsymphony.org](https://njsymphony.org) or our newsroom for press releases and photos.

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